



Americans are generally extroverted, friendly, talkative—and apparently, workaholics. Studies by various travel companies and polling groups have shown that Americans are among the group of nationalities that take the least amount of vacation (others being the [Japanese, Taiwanese, South Koreans, Singaporeans, and Mexicans](#)). Part of the reason may be that the United States is the only developed nation in the world that does not guarantee any paid holidays for workers [by law](#).

The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics concluded in a recent report](#) that seventy-two percent of wage earners received both holidays and paid vacations voluntarily granted by their employers. The rest of the employed population does not get paid vacation.

It's unfortunate that Americans regularly skip using all their allotted vacation days\*. Surveys of people in the U.S. report that they do not feel their bosses support taking leave, and they fear that being away from work looks like they are not committed to their jobs. Understandably,

workers are afraid to look less than absolutely dedicated in this job market. Looking at our lack of vacation days and our failure to take advantage of them, one could conclude that we are not a well-rested people.

However, health researchers, sleep researchers, and psychologists have found that there is a direct correlation between rest and good health, and rest and productivity. Taking your vacation is almost a tonic against occupational stress.

So if you have paid vacation and have been putting off your annual jaunt, it's time to sit down and plan one before summer ends. Federal government documents are great resources for planning recreation. The excellent tools [National Trails System: Map and Guide, 2010 ed.](#) and [National Park System \(Wall Map Poster\)](#) can aid you in planning your trip. With the help of these maps, you can hike trails and learn history while you are appreciating the outdoors and getting a workout. Or you can pick a national park you have never visited before, and experience something new to spur your creativity. If you enjoy visiting cities, pick a park not far outside of town so that you could get a taste of nature in addition to some cultural experiences.

Once you pick a park, search the Web site [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov) to find the activities available there. If you look at the National Park system map and find yourself spoiled for choice, you may be able to narrow down your options when you discover the types of activities available at the parks. And if you are interested in vacationing in a city or a resort, but want to hit a nearby recreation center, you can search for alternatives just by entering a city or zip code. For example, if you plan to visit Las Vegas, but you'd like some time to enjoy rock climbing too, you might rent a car for the day and drive to [Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area](#), 12.57 miles from the city center.

